



## Shame

Survivors of suicide loss may feel like they have to keep the cause of death a secret due to feelings of shame. By keeping the cause of death private, the bereaved might think that they are protecting themselves or the person who died from being stigmatized or feeling shame.

Shame is closely related to stigma. Stigma is the root of shame. Shame is a feeling that comes from our perception that others will think that an action, or lack of action, was the wrong thing to do. Stigma can be subtle, like a friend appearing uncomfortable discussing the death by suicide, or it can be very overt like an old friend no longer answering the survivor's phone calls after a death by suicide.

Stacey Freedenthal, PhD, LCSW shares in her article "*Shame Festers in Dark Places*": *Keeping Suicide a Secret*:

Shame festers in dark places. The more the family hides, or denies, that their loved one died by suicide, the more the shame will grow inside of them. By keeping the suicide secret, they are buying into the idea that their loved one did something shameful, and that it brought shame to them and their family.

When shame goes unchallenged in its darkness, it wins. When shame – undeserved shame, I should say, and shame about suicide is most definitely undeserved – is exposed to light, it weakens. With openness, people find a community of others who have also lost a loved one to suicide, who can normalize the experience, who can offer hope and healing, and who can provide an antidote to shame – acceptance.

By hiding the suicide of their loved one, families are depriving themselves of support from others. They are depriving themselves of community with other survivors of suicide loss. They are depriving themselves of the comforting truth that they are not alone.

Full article here: <https://www.speakingofsuicide.com/2013/06/30/keeping-suicide-secret/>

As we are able to acknowledge the truth,  
we can minimize the stigma attached to a suicide death.

In this article, *3 Therapist-Approved Steps to Stop the 'Self-Shame Spiral,'* self-compassion is a skill — and it's one we all can learn.

Use affirmations to practice self-compassion. Many of us who struggle with self-compassion also struggle with what I often call the shame or self-doubt monster, whose voice can pop up at the most unexpected moments. With that in mind, I've named some very common phrases of the shame monster:

- “I'm not good enough.”
- “I shouldn't feel this way.”
- “Why can't I do things like other people?”
- “I'm too old to be struggling with these issues.”
- “I should have [fill in the blank]; I could have [fill in the blank].”

Just like flexing a muscle or practicing a new skill, cultivating self-compassion requires that we practice “talking back” to this shame monster. With time, the hope is that your internal voice becomes stronger and louder than the voice of self-doubt.

Some examples to try:

- “I'm absolutely worthy and divinely deserving.”
- “I'm allowed to feel however I feel — my feelings are valid.”
- “I'm unique in my own wonderful ways while still sharing sacred interconnected human experiences with many.”
- “I'll never ever be too old (or too much of anything, for that matter) to continue cultivating curiosities about my own behaviors and spaces for growth.”
- “In this moment I am [fill in the blank]; in this moment I feel [fill in the blank].”

If these don't feel natural to you, that's OK! Try opening up a journal and writing some affirmations of your own.

Full article here: <https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/shame-spiral-self-compassion>